United Nations S/2017/284

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 April 2017
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 4 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith humanitarian and information bulletins from the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 31 March-4 April 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) P. Ilichev
Acting Permanent Representative

17-05849 (E) 130417 170417

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 4 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (31 March 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out four humanitarian operations in the following governorates: three in Aleppo and one in Dar'a.

In the populated area of Manbij in Aleppo governorate, as well as in Aleppo city (in the Bab Oinasirin and Shahba' Qadimah districts), 2,000 hot meals, bread, water and 500 food parcels were delivered to residents.

Three hundred and fifty food parcels and toys were distributed to residents of Karfah in Dar'a governorate.

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 4,192 residents. In total, 12.1 tons of humanitarian assistance have been distributed to the population.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

With the assistance of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides, four humanitarian convoys carrying United Nations cargoes were dispatched to the populated areas of Khan al-Shaykh (Damascus governorate), Rastan (Homs governorate) and Tafas and Tayyibah (Dar'a governorate).

Russian aircraft dropped 20.8 tons of humanitarian cargo (food products) to the city of Dayr al-Zawr, which were received by the Syrian authorities through the United Nations.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (1 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, 10 ceasefire agreements have been signed with the populated areas of Janub Mushtaqqat al-Mahrum, Mashrafat Anz, Umm Hajarah, Iblisiyah, Dubaylah, Alwan, Hamzah and Ayid in Aleppo governorate and Mankat al-Hatab and Mismiyah in Dar'a governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,429.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 remains unchanged at 136.

The number of populated areas that the Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 1 January 2017 has increased to 222.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of 64 square kilometres. A total of 3,671.7 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime stands at 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 15 violations in the following governorates: 8 in Damascus, 4 in Ladhiqiyah, 2 in Hama and 1 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported 18 violations in the following governorates: 3 in Damascus, 1 in Dar'a, 7 in Hama, 1 in Ladhiqiyah, 1 in Homs and 5 in Aleppo.

During its investigations of the incidents, the Russian representative office was unable to confirm any of the 18 violations.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (2 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, two ceasefire agreements have been signed with the populated areas of Maskanah in Damascus governorate and Rudaymah al-Sharqiyah in Suwayda' governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,431.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 has increased to 139.

The number of populated areas that the Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) since 1 January 2017 remains unchanged at 222.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of eight square kilometres. A total of 3,679.7 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime remains unchanged at 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 14 violations in the following governorates: 8 in Damascus, 1 in Dar'a, 3 in Ladhiqiyah and 2 in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has reported 11 violations of the consolidated agreement in the following governorates: 2 in Aleppo, 4 in Damascus, 1 in Ladhiqiyah and 4 in Hama.

During its investigations of the incidents, the Russian representative office was unable to confirm any of the 11 violations.

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (2 April 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out seven humanitarian operations in the following governorates: six in Aleppo and 1 in Ladhiqiyah.

In the Aleppo city districts of Zabdiyah, Ballat, Dakhrt-Auaad, Shahba' al-Qadimah, Karm al-Da'da and Shaykh Maqsud, bread and 3,000 hot meals were delivered to residents.

In the populated area of Qasmin in Ladhiqiyah governorate, gift items for children, stationery supplies, lap robes, blankets and pillows were provided to residents.

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 6,350 residents. In total, 1.98 tons of humanitarian cargo have been distributed to the population.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Over the past 24 hours, the United Nations and partners have continued to provide medical, psychological and legal assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic. Work is also continuing to restore infrastructure and provide temporary accommodations to those in need.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (3 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, three ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas Manshiyat al-Sabil in Dar'a governorate, Kawan al-Wasi'ah in Qunaytirah governorate and Qarahta in Damascus governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,434.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 remains unchanged at 139.

The number of populated areas that the Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant since 1 January 2017 remains unchanged at 222.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of 7.32 square kilometres. A total of 3,687.02 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime remains unchanged at 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 13 violations in the following governorates: 6 in Damascus, 4 in Ladhiqiyah, 1 in Hama and 2 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office reported 10 violations in the following governorates: 6 in Hama, 3 in Aleppo and 1 in Idlib.

During its investigations of these incidents, the Russian representative office was unable to confirm any of the 10 violations.

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (3 April 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out nine humanitarian operations in the following governorates: seven in Aleppo, one in Suwayda' and one in Ladhiqiyah.

In the Aleppo city districts of Hamdaniyah-1, Ballat, Shaykh-Najjar, Khalidiyah, Shaykh Maqsud, Aziziyah and Shahba', six tons of potable bottled water, 500 hot meals and 350 food parcels were provided to residents. An additional 650 food parcels were distributed to residents of the populated areas of Walghah (Suwayda' governorate) and Hammam Qarahilah (Ladiqhiyah governorate).

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 3,250 residents. In total, 10.4 tons of humanitarian cargo have been distributed to the population.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Over the past 24 hours, the United Nations and partners have continued to provide medical, psychological and legal assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic. Work is also continuing to restore infrastructure and provide temporary accommodations to those in need.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (4 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, two ceasefire agreements have been signed with the populated areas of Khan Arnabah Gharbiyah in Qunaytirah governorate and Majadil in Suwayda' governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,436.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 remains unchanged at 139.

The number of populated areas that the Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 1 January 2017 has increased to 225.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of 51 square kilometres. A total of 3,738.02 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime remains unchanged at 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 14 violations in the following governorates: 7 in Damascus, 3 in Ladhiqiyah and 4 in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has reported 28 violations in the following governorates: 5 in Hama, 3 in Aleppo, 6 in Idlib, 11 in Damascus and 3 in Homs.

During investigations of these incidents it was established that in one case a group from the Nusrah Front was fired upon. Russia has not confirmed the other 27 violations.

United Nations S/2017/285

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2295 (2016), I have the honour to transmit a note verbale from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations dated 27 March 2017, conveying a report to the Security Council on the implementation of the mandate of French troops in Mali (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

17-05550 (E) 050417 050417

Please recycle

Annex

[Original: French]

The Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Secretariat and has the honour to convey the information below.

Pursuant to paragraph 35 of Security Council resolution 2295 (2016) of 29 June 2016, France has the honour to enclose herewith the report on actions undertaken between 1 December 2016 and 1 March 2017 by French forces in support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

The Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations would be grateful if the Secretary-General would bring this report to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

The Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations takes this opportunity to convey to the United Nations Secretariat the renewed assurances of its highest consideration.

Enclosure

Fifteenth report on the support provided by French forces to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali between 1 December 2016 and 1 March 2017

Reference: Security Council resolution 2295 (2016) of 29 June 2016

This fifteenth report since the establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) summarizes the activities conducted between 1 December 2016 and 1 March 2017 by French forces in support of MINUSMA.

Since 1 December 2016, no combat action has been conducted in response to an imminent and serious threat to MINUSMA.

United Nations S/2017/286

Security Council

Distr.: General
6 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you, on behalf of my delegation and the Member States of France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, a letter dated 4 April 2017 from the High Negotiations Committee, as requested by the General Coordinator of the Committee, Riad Hijab (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew Rycroft

17-05609 (E) 110417 120417

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Annex to the letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

It is with great concern that I write to you on behalf of the High Negotiations Committee regarding a new, horrific chemical weapons attack perpetrated against civilians in Idlib by the Syrian regime and its allies only four days after the close of the fifth round of peace talks in Geneva.

At approximately 6:30 a.m. on Tuesday 4 April, planes carrying weapons loaded with unidentified chemicals carried out an attack on the northern quarter of the town of Khan Shaykhun in Idlib. At least 100 people were killed in the air raids, including no fewer than 10 children. More than 200 others were injured. Doctors reported that the victims exhibited symptoms consistent with exposure to the nerve agent Sarin, including bleeding and foaming from the nose and mouth, convulsions, fainting, vomiting and constricted irises. Both photographic and video footage provide clear and conclusive evidence that the victims were the target of a chemical attack. Eyewitness reports also indicate that, on the heels of those brutal attacks, one of the clinics treating victims of chemical exposure was deliberately targeted by airstrikes. Sources report that Syrian regime aircraft and those of their allies were flying over Idlib on Tuesday and that they bear clear responsibility for the attacks.

This deadly attack on civilians in Idlib — most likely involving chemical weapons — ranks among the most horrific atrocities committed since Assad's forces killed some 1,500 civilians in August 2013 using chemical weapons. It also amounts to a war crime as defined in the United Nations Chemical Weapons Convention and in the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods in Warfare, to which Syria acceded on 14 September 2013 and 17 December 1968, respectively. Most importantly, it constitutes a direct violation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2209 (2015), 2235 (2015), 2254 (2015), 2258 (2015), 2268 (2016), 2332 (2017) and 2118 (2013), in which the Security Council unanimously decided, in the event of any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic, to impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

While the Syrian regime makes a show of engaging in negotiations, its actions in Idlib and across Syria tell an altogether different story. It is high time that Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) was enforced. The climate of impunity that has long reigned in Syria has allowed atrocities involving chemical weapons to multiply, creating conditions in which the Syrian regime and its allies feel emboldened to use chemical weapons, and to starve and bomb civilians at will. However, it is not too late to deter further chemical weapon attacks or to salvage prospects for peace in Geneva. A genuine effort on the part of Security Council members to enforce international law, including Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), can save lives in Syria and create conditions conducive to real peace talks in Geneva. The Syrian opposition therefore calls on the Council and its members to:

(a) Authorize an immediate investigation of the chemical weapon attacks in Idlib; instruct the relevant agencies to test the bodies of the Idlib victims in order to identify the substance used to kill them; confirm whether Sarin was the gas responsible for these heinous attacks, and identify the perpetrators.

(b) Deter future atrocities involving chemical weapons by protecting Syrian civilians from future indiscriminate attacks. Future ceasefire violations must be deterred and reported accurately when they occur. Credible efforts must also be made to curb war crimes.

(c) Uphold international humanitarian law by enforcing Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and take immediate action to impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, including sanctions on the perpetrators of Tuesday's deadly chemical attacks.

(d) Ensure that any party that gasses, starves or bombs Syrian civilians is held accountable by referring the case of Syria to the International Criminal Court. If that route remains blocked, Member States should establish a special tribunal and apply domestic and universal jurisdiction in order to deliver justice to the victims.

The High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian opposition stands ready to assist any impartial investigation into Tuesday's chemical weapon attacks. Furthermore, we remain committed to achieving a political solution in Syria. However, such a solution cannot be reached so long as the Syrian regime is allowed to slaughter innocent women and children with impunity. The Syrian regime gasses children because it believes that the world will not act to stop it. Assad is counting on the Security Council's paralysis and apathy, hoping that his atrocities will destroy prospects for peace. However, the Security Council is not the only means of taking action. Member States can and must take unilateral measures to enforce international law and save lives. Member States have the opportunity — and a responsibility — to prove Assad wrong. The Syrian people are counting on you to do so.

(*Signed*) Riad **Hijab**
General Coordinator, High Negotiations Committee
of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces

United Nations S/2017/287

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 4 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of the United States of America, the Security Council will hold a briefing on United Nations peacekeeping on Thursday, 6 April 2017. In order to help to steer the discussion on the subject, the United States has prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nikki **Haley**
Ambassador
United States Permanent Representative

17-05508 (E) 050417

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Annex to the letter dated 4 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper

Thematic debate: Peacekeeping operations review

Overview

United Nations peacekeeping is the most powerful — and most high-profile — instrument the Security Council has at its disposal to fulfil its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council has long grappled with how to increase peacekeeping effectiveness, with discussions commonly based around operational reforms necessary to strengthen the role, capacity, effectiveness, accountability and efficiency of the United Nations system in executing peacekeeping mandates.

With this debate, the United States of America proposes that Security Council members instead focus on the aspect of peacekeeping reform related to the political foundations necessary for the success of peacekeeping missions, including whether the mandated tasks and overall concept of the mission are consistent with political realities on the ground. We encourage Council members to consider whether current peacekeeping operations continue to be the best-suited mechanisms for meeting the needs of those on the ground and achieving the Council's political objectives, or if changes are needed. That is, are current missions still "fit for purpose?" With ever-increasing demand on the United Nations and its Member States to provide such capabilities, the Council must carefully consider whether the conditions still exist for these missions to be successful and, if not, what needs to change. For the United Nations to meet the security challenges of the future, it must work today to complete the tasks for its missions from the past. Council members authorizing these missions owe it to the personnel that they send into harm's way to ensure that their bravery is not wasted, nor their tasks impossible.

Briefer

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres

Key questions

Instead of placing the focus of this debate on operational issues such as peacekeeper conduct and discipline or problems with training and equipment — all important in their own right — Security Council members are encouraged to review missions, identify areas in which mandates no longer match political realities and propose alternatives or paths towards restructuring to bring missions more in line with achievable outcomes. Questions to consider include:

- What should the Council do in situations where there is no political process to support? What if the missions serve a valuable protection role, but without any conceivable conclusion to this role?

- Can the Council better identify a mission's core objective, maintain focus on achieving it and acknowledge when tasks are completed? How do we guard against mission creep?
- Is it advisable, or even possible, to operate a mission without the strategic consent of the host Government? What commitments should a host Government be required to accept when the Council authorizes a mission? What commitments should the Council expect of countries hosting United Nations peace operations where the United Nations is helping the Government to establish its authority throughout its territory, such as in Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic or Somalia?
- How long should the Council wait before re-examining the value of a mission when the political process breaks down? Would it be beneficial to institutionalize the inclusion of clear exit strategies in every mission's mandate? What should the Council do to ensure that parties to a conflict that are engaged in peace processes have stronger incentives to reach agreement that will allow the United Nations to withdraw its mission?
- Which specific missions need this kind of attention, and how should the Council address them? Are there alternatives to peacekeeping operations we should be considering in these cases?

Background

As at 31 January 2017, there were 99,034 uniformed personnel, including 85,408 troops and 12,786 police, serving in the 16 peacekeeping operations overseen by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, with an approved budget of $7.87 billion. United Nations peacekeeping is a vital aspect of the Organization. However, a significant number of peacekeeping operations have mandates conceived years ago — and in some cases decades ago — that are no longer supported by a political environment conducive to achieving the Security Council's aims. It is crucial that missions contribute to increased safety and security, but they can also create a subsidized and unsteady peace, which can quickly become a dependency that discourages long-term solutions. The United Nations becomes trapped in these frozen conflicts, and peacekeeping missions that were initially conceived to provide temporary security to allow space for political solutions to take hold instead deploy for years without clear mandates or exit plans.

Although the operational aspects of peacekeeping often draw the most attention, the Security Council has also recognized the importance of an underlying political process as a foundation for United Nations peacekeeping. For example, in its 2009 presidential statement on peacekeeping (S/PRST/2009/24), the Council recognized "the need to weigh the full range of responses when addressing a situation which may endanger international peace and security, and to deploy UN peacekeeping missions only as an accompaniment, not as an alternative, to a political strategy". And of course, the central finding of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations report (S/2015/446) is that "protection mandates must be realistic and linked to a wider political approach". However, we have not always followed through on this commitment to ensure that our peacekeeping missions continue to maintain a strong political foundation.

Outcome

While no product is envisioned, we encourage the Security Council to apply the lessons and methods discussed in this meeting to our regular mandate review process to ensure that conditions still justify the missions and that political processes conceivably lead towards realistic, achievable solutions.

United Nations A/71/861–S/2017/288

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 31
Prevention of armed conflict

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Letter dated 1 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instructions of my Government, I am transmitting herewith the Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on the aggression carried out against Artsakh in April 2016 (see annex).

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

17-05533 (E) 070417

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Annex to the letter dated 1 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1 April 2017

It has been a year since Azerbaijan's April aggression against Artsakh.

During four days of April 2016 Azerbaijan conducted the same type of aggressive actions and barbarism against the population of Artsakh that it carried out for about four years in the beginning of 1990s, when it tried to deprive the people of Nagorno-Karabakh of their right to live in their homeland and to exercise their RIGHT to self-determination.

We pay tribute to the memory of all heroes who fell repelling the attack of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and who gave their lives to prevent mass atrocities against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

While the international community was condemning the gross violations of International Humanitarian Law by the Azerbaijani armed forces, Baku was praising the acts of barbarism and their perpetrators.

Azerbaijan's adventurism severely damaged the peace process.

On May 16 in Vienna, upon the initiative of the United States Secretary of State, and on June 20 in St. Petersburg, at the invitation of the President of Russia, the meetings of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan took place, aimed at stabilizing the situation, preventing new escalation and the creation of conditions conducive to the advancement of the negotiation process. As an outcome of those meetings, it was emphasized that it is necessary to settle the conflict exclusively through peaceful means, to strictly adhere to the 1994-1995 trilateral ceasefire agreements, which have no time limitations. It was agreed to establish in the shortest possible time an investigation mechanism for ceasefire violations and to expand the capacities of the team of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

However, Azerbaijan refused to implement the reached agreements and found itself in isolation by opposing the international community.

The highest leadership of Azerbaijan openly lies when it claims that the Co-Chair countries allegedly recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. It pretends as if it does not understand what the Co-Chair countries are referring to when they say that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh should implement its right to self-determination through the legally binding free expression of will. Armenia shares the same approach: indeed, the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh should be determined by the people of Artsakh. That forgery of Baku exposes the failure of the policy of Azerbaijan. After failing in the negotiation process Baku resorted to the military solution but failed again.

The April war once again vividly proved that Artsakh can never be part of Azerbaijan under any status, and that the implementation of the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination is irreversible.

In response to Azerbaijan's continuous threats to use force, the international community clearly warns that it will not be tolerated.

As a guarantor of Artsakh's security, Armenia will ensure the safety of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Together with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries, we will continue the efforts aimed at the exclusively peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

United Nations S/2017/289

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as President of the Security Council, I am forwarding to you a letter dated 9 March 2017 from the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), based on the Working Group's conclusions adopted on 14 February 2017 (S/AC.51/2017/1) (see annex).

(*Signed*) Nikki R. **Haley**
President of the Security Council

17-05523 (E) 070417

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Annex

At its 61st formal meeting, on 9 January 2017, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict examined the third report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Colombia (S/2016/837), covering the period from September 2011 to June 2016. At its 62nd formal meeting, on 14 February 2017, the Working Group adopted its conclusions on children and armed conflict in Colombia (S/AC.51/2017/1).

In follow-up to the recommendations of the Working Group and subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012), 2143 (2014) and 2255 (2015), I am entrusted, in my capacity as Chair of the Working Group, to:

(a) Request you to ensure the continued effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in Colombia, including for the full and expeditious implementation of the agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) for the separation and reintegration of children, signed on 15 May 2016;

(b) Request you to encourage the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting and other relevant United Nations entities to continue their engagement and efforts to support the Government in addressing violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict, in particular with a view to engaging the National Liberation Army (ELN) to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in violation of international law.

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Chair
Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

United Nations S/2017/290

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 3 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), established by the Security Council in its resolution 1996 (2011) of 8 July 2011 and most recently extended by the Council in its resolution 2327 (2016) of 16 December 2016.

The post of Force Commander of UNMISS has been vacant since 11 November 2016 and requires urgent replacement. Following the necessary consultations, I wish to inform you that it is my intention to reassign Lieutenant General Frank Mushyo Kamanzi of Rwanda, currently the Force Commander of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, as the Force Commander of UNMISS.

I should be grateful if you would bring this matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

17-05529 (E) 060417

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United Nations S/2017/291

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that your letter dated 3 April 2017 (S/2017/290) concerning your intention to reassign Lieutenant General Frank Mushyo Kamanzi (Rwanda), currently the Force Commander of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, as the Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), has been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council. They take note of the intention expressed in your letter.

(*Signed*) Nikki R. **Haley**
President of the Security Council

17-05532 (E) 060417

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United Nations A/71/869–S/2017/292

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
12 April 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 31
Prevention of armed conflict

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach herewith the commentary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the intention of the Russian Federation to introduce military conscription in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

17-05988 (E) 240417

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Annex to the letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Commentary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the intention of the Russian Federation to introduce military conscription in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expressed its strong protest to the Russian Federation against its intention to introduce military conscription in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

General Assembly resolution 71/205, of 19 December 2016, entitled "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)", established the fact of the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and called on the Russian Federation to ensure the fulfilment of its obligations under international humanitarian law, international mechanisms for the protection of human rights and other legal instruments to which it is a party.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine demanded the cancellation of the conscription of citizens who live in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as the strict observance of international obligations by the Russian side.

United Nations S/2017/293

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

Special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 29 of Security Council resolution 2318 of 15 November 2016, in which the Council requested that the Secretary-General conduct a strategic review of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), comprising an in-depth examination of the related resources and structure of its uniformed and civilian components. The present report provides recommendations on how UNISFA should be optimally configured and streamlined, further to an evidence-based assessment of the impact of UNISFA activities aimed at the implementation of its mandate under resolution 2287 (2016).

II. Strategic review

2. The review assessed the ability of UNISFA to fulfil its mandate under Security Council resolutions 1990 (2011), 2024 (2011) and 2318 (2016), considered options for a possible reconfiguration of the Mission based on its findings and engaged with the African Union on the way forward in the political process between the Sudan and South Sudan with respect to Abyei and the implementation of their border security arrangements. The review included an assessment of the ability of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to implement its mandate and achieve full operating capability. The review follows a similar exercise in April 2014 (see S/2014/336), as a result of which it was determined that supporting the resumption of community dialogue and administration by the communities, under the supervision of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, would allow the United Nations to continue meeting its strategic objective of helping to consolidate peace and security in Abyei and create an environment conducive to the resolution of the dispute over the final status of Abyei. Regarding the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, the 2014 exercise had concluded that, in the absence of full cooperation between the Sudan and South Sudan on border security, the United Nations should not continue investing in its infrastructure.

3. The strategic review mission conducted its field visit from 15 and 23 February 2017. The review team was led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and included representatives from the Department of Field Support, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (on behalf

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of the humanitarian country team) and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as personnel from UNISFA. The review team met with senior officials from the Governments of the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia; representatives of the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities; representatives of the African Union, including the Facilitator of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee; a representative of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel; members of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the African Union Border Programme; and representatives of the United Nations presences in the region (United Nations Office to the African Union, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan). The team also engaged with the United Nations country team; representatives of key donors in the Sudan and South Sudan; United Nations agencies, funds and programmes; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Abyei Area.

III. Background and findings of the strategic assessment

4. The Security Council adopted resolution 1990 (2011) against a backdrop of increased tensions in the Abyei area at the end of 2010, which had resulted in a series of violent incidents in the area in early January 2011 and a build-up of forces from the north and the south. In the absence of a final agreement on the status of the Abyei Area, temporary security arrangements were agreed upon by the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January and March 2011. These agreements were implemented only in part, however, and a number of violent incidents occurred in April and May 2011. In response to the situation, the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, with the support of the Government of Ethiopia, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan and other stakeholders, facilitated high-level meetings between the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which led to the signing of the 20 June 2011 Agreement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area.

5. In that context, UNISFA was given the mandate, inter alia, to demilitarize the Abyei Area, to participate in relevant Abyei Area bodies, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the free movement of humanitarian personnel and to strengthen the capacity of the Abyei Police Service. Since its deployment, UNISFA has effectively delivered on its mandated tasks. Despite the slow progress in finding a resolution to the dispute on the final status of Abyei, UNISFA has succeeded in stabilizing the Abyei Area, providing security for the seasonal migration of the Misseriya and facilitating humanitarian assistance.

Political dynamics

6. The political process foreseen in the 20 June 2011 Agreement remains in a state of paralysis. No meaningful progress has been made in the establishment of joint arrangements since the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief on 4 May 2013. The Abyei Joint Oversight Committee — the body with political and administrative oversight over Abyei — has not met since March 2015, creating a political vacuum in the formal joint governance of Abyei. Concurrently, no progress has been made in the resolution of the final status of Abyei since the presentation of the proposal by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in September 2012, despite President Al-Bashir of the Sudan and President Kiir of South Sudan agreeing to discuss and resolve that matter.

7. At the heart of the paralysis is the stance taken by the parties regarding their respective positions on the current and future status of Abyei. Neither side has

demonstrated a willingness to contemplate the concessions necessary for a political solution. In the meantime, both are preoccupied by internal situations (Darfur and the Two Areas for the Sudan and the armed conflict in South Sudan) that are of higher national priority than the administration or the future of Abyei. The result is a long-term deadlock which compels UNISFA to perform its mandated role as the guarantor of security in Abyei while also improvising the crafting of ad hoc solutions to the administrative and law and order demands of Abyei.

8. The Sudan insists that the literal terms of the 20 June 2011 Agreement are the sole frame of reference for Abyei and that, accordingly, Abyei remains a part of the Sudan unless "the 1 January 1956 line between the north and the south" is "changed as a result of the outcome of the referendum foreseen in the Abyei Protocol or other decision of the Parties on the final status of Abyei". The insistence of the Sudan that the establishment of a joint administration is a sine qua non for addressing all Abyei issues effectively precludes recourse to alternative channels for discussion and negotiation. This, in turn, provides justification for the Sudan to retain the presence of armed personnel in the Diffra oil complex, in violation of the 20 June 2011 Agreement.

9. For its part, South Sudan ascribes prime importance to the July 2009 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, which is "final and binding" on the parties and which, in its view, constitutes the most authoritative pronouncement on the borders of Abyei, namely an affirmation that, under international law, the Abyei Area is conterminous with the boundaries of the areas over which the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms exercise their traditional prerogative. On 31 October 2016, in commemoration of the third anniversary of the unilateral referendum held in the Abyei Area, around 700 Ngok Dinka led by the Paramount Chief demonstrated in front of UNISFA headquarters in Abyei and handed over a petition letter calling for recognition of the referendum.

10. The deadlock in the implementation of the 20 June 2011 Agreement leaves UNISFA, which is intended as an "interim" mission, in a state of limbo. As there is no clear prospect of a peaceful resolution of the status of Abyei, UNISFA also lacks an exit horizon.

11. At the community level, both the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya community leaders expressed a desire for peaceful coexistence. Nevertheless, they continue to blame each other's Governments for failing to implement the 20 June 2011 Agreement, and each accuses the United Nations of bias towards the other. The Misseriya leaders criticized the international community, including the United Nations and NGOs, for a perceived general lack of support, as well as lack of access to funding for water, road and other projects. They expressed concerns regarding access to natural resources in southern Abyei, to Abyei Town and to their homes in Abyei, as well as the lack of formal administration and a police service. They requested assistance to enable the safe return to Abyei of 287 Misseriya families who they stated had been displaced to Muglad and Khartoum during the conflict in 2011. The Misseriya leaders called for the issue of the final status of Abyei to be resolved.

12. The Ngok Dinka maintained that shared sovereignty over Abyei was of critical importance and criticized the United Nations for allegedly favouring Sudanese sovereignty over Abyei. They also raised the issues of the armed Sudanese personnel at the Diffra oil complex and the presence of armed criminals in Abyei, while voicing support for the work of the community protection committees. The Ngok Dinka also were of the view that there had not been sufficient development projects in their community. The unresolved killing of the Ngok Dinka Paramount

Chief in 2013 was mentioned as a serious concern that hindered peaceful coexistence with the Misseriya.

Security

13. Senior officials in the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia were unanimous in affirming that UNISFA had successfully fulfilled its security mandate and applauded the Mission for establishing and maintaining a significant degree of stability in Abyei. All interlocutors expressed the shared view that, in the present circumstances and as long as the status of Abyei remained contested, the withdrawal of UNISFA, or any weakening in its military strength or posture, could lead to heightened tensions between the Sudan and South Sudan, with dire consequences for both countries and for the wider region. Although both the Sudan and South Sudan assigned high political, strategic and economic importance to Abyei, the presence of UNISFA forces rendered highly unlikely the possibility of any major confrontation.

14. The security situation in the Abyei Area remains unpredictable but calm, owing primarily to the robust and proactive military deployment concept employed by UNISFA. Since 2015, the annual migration season, from October to mid-May, which is traditionally the time of highest intercommunal tensions and conflict, has been largely peaceful thanks to the Mission's implementation of its flexible conflict management and mitigation strategy, involving the armed enforcement of a line of disengagement between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, in close consultation with the communities themselves. The establishment of community protection committees in southern Abyei has also served to strengthen community-oriented crime prevention. Nevertheless, community protection committees have not been established in northern Abyei owing to reservations on the part of the Sudan. The revival of traditional systems of sharing resources and the reinitiation of a peace dialogue between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities has also contributed to improving the security situation, as the two communities, with support from UNISFA, agencies, funds, programmes and NGOs, have embraced self-regulation, peaceful coexistence and non-violent resolution of disputes through dialogue.

15. Despite the relative calm achieved by the conflict management and mitigation strategy and the vigorous posture of UNISFA, the security context is still vulnerable to a number of risk factors. These include the law and order vacuum created by the absence of the Abyei Police Service and formal criminal justice institutions, the potential for increased frequency of violent intercommunal crime fuelled by the prevalence of small arms and light weapons, and the continued threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war. A further risk is the fact that both the Sudan and South Sudan continue to violate aspects of the 20 June 2011 Agreement and related Security Council resolutions through the presence of armed personnel within the Abyei Area. The Sudan continues to maintain between 120 and 150 armed personnel around the Diffra oil complex, while incursions by armed personnel, suspected to be members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), continue to be observed in the southern parts of the Abyei Area.

16. The proximity of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and SPLA forces just outside the boundaries of the Abyei Area underlines the continuing strategic importance of Abyei to both the Sudan and South Sudan. It also points to the risk that local conflict between the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities could escalate into a larger confrontation. That risk was acknowledged by senior officials of both the Sudan and South Sudan during the strategic review mission. The presence of UNISFA was, therefore, explicitly recognized as a deterrent to armed conflict, as well as an effective security buffer between the two communities. With

the persisting political instability and armed conflict in South Sudan, the potential effects of the spread of fighting into the Abyei Area should not be overlooked.

Humanitarian situation

17. The humanitarian situation has remained relatively stable in the absence of large-scale clashes and displacement in the Abyei Area. Nevertheless, the presence of armed elements, sporadic intercommunal conflict and the absence of public institutions and government services continue to drive humanitarian and recovery needs. Approximately 160,000 people are in need of some form of assistance in the Abyei Area, and 20,000 Ngok Dinka remain displaced after fleeing south of the Kiir/Bahr-el-Arab River in 2011. Since April 2016, some 13,000 Ngok Dinka have returned to their areas of origin as a result of a gradual improvement in the security situation, though many continue to commute to areas further south to access education and other services. Many have settled very close to the UNISFA company operating bases. In addition, approximately 8,000 people displaced from neighbouring areas in South Sudan because of basic food needs and insecurity remain in the Abyei Area and receive humanitarian assistance across all sectors. The failure by the parties to establish the Abyei Area Administration, and the resulting sense of insecurity, have hampered governance, the rule of law and the sustainable provision of public services, presenting a considerable impediment to the sustainable return of displaced persons. In addition to the Ngok Dinka, there are approximately 25,000 Misseriya in the north of Abyei and 35,000 seasonally nomadic Misseriya who entered the area in late 2016 and are expected to return in mid-2017.

18. Funding for humanitarian activities is scarce, including in the health sector, and engagement is mostly limited to humanitarian assistance, except for quick-impact projects that are allocated by UNISFA. The International Organization for Migration, often in collaboration with international NGOs, helps with the implementation of quick-impact projects. The activities of international NGOs (funded directly by donors or through United Nations agencies) cover all sectors, including nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and livelihoods. These activities are conducted almost entirely in the central and southern parts of Abyei. Some United Nations agencies and two national NGOs are able to operate in northern Abyei, with support focused on the rehabilitation of public buildings/facilities and water points, community livelihoods and vaccination of livestock.

19. Communities returning to Abyei and internally displaced persons from South Sudan are particularly vulnerable, since few systems are in place to support them. The unemployment rate in Abyei is extremely high, especially among young people, who see very few prospects for the future. Some international NGOs, in collaboration with United Nations agencies, work on reconciliation, including by facilitating conferences on migration prior to the migration season to prevent conflict between the Misseriya and Dinka communities. These efforts have been successful.

Protection of civilians and human rights

20. The mandate of UNISFA includes a role in human rights monitoring and addressing sexual and gender-based violence and child rights. There has been no progress, however, in the operationalization of the human rights monitoring and reporting mandate in the Abyei Area, as called for by the Security Council in its

resolutions 2318 (2016), 2287 (2016), 2251 (2015) and 2156 (2014), because of the non-issuance of visas by the Government of the Sudan.

21. Women and children, in particular, face human rights risks in Abyei. The number of unaccompanied children and children living on the streets has grown with the conflict in South Sudan. Although most have continued to seek safety in the Sudan, a general lack of protection mechanisms to address issues relating to unaccompanied children continues to put many children at risk of violence, exploitation, abuse, abduction and recruitment. Operationalization of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children remains a challenge owing to access difficulties and limited capacity on the ground.

22. The human rights situation in the Abyei Area is exacerbated by the absence of a functional criminal justice system and rule of law institutions. Aside from traditional justice mechanisms, there is no functioning formal judicial system in the Abyei Area and the existing makeshift detention facilities are in poor condition.

IV. Status of mandate implementation

23. The review team considered each of the mandated tasks set out in paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution 2318 (2016), with references to relevant paragraphs of Security Council resolutions 1990 (2011), 2024 (2011) and 2075 (2012).

Monitoring and verifying the redeployment of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army from the Abyei Area, and enforcing demilitarization

24. UNISFA is accomplishing to a large extent its mandated task of monitoring and verifying the redeployment of SAF and SPLA from the Abyei Area. Those forces have mostly withdrawn, enabling UNISFA to dominate the Abyei Area militarily. The exceptions to full accomplishment of this task are the continued presence of Sudanese armed personnel in the Diffra oil complex and occasional incursions from South Sudan into Abyei by unauthorized elements, including SPLA. The strategic review noted that, in the current circumstances, such violations do not constitute any significant threat to security in Abyei and do not in themselves undermine the relative calm facilitated by the UNISFA forces.

25. With regard to demilitarization, UNISFA successfully enforces a security regime which prohibits openly carrying or displaying firearms of any kind. The prohibition is enforced through the swift and robust confiscation of any weapons that are visible and the systematic destruction of weapons seized, utilizing the technical support and equipment of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). Approximately 125 weapons and over 8,000 rounds of small arms ammunition have been destroyed at the UNISFA/UNMAS weapons and ammunition management facility at Dukra. Mine risk education is also delivered to UNISFA civilian personnel, military observers, military and United Nations agency personnel and local communities, including nomadic herdsmen and returnees.

Participation in Abyei Area bodies

26. The ability of UNISFA to participate in Abyei Area bodies is dependent on the establishment and functioning of the Abyei Area Administration, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, the Abyei Police Service, the Joint Military Observer Committee, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and other

bodies foreseen by the 20 June 2011 Agreement. UNISFA has actively participated in the nine meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee that have been held so far and continues to participate in, and contribute to, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

Mine action activities

27. Since 2011, UNMAS has provided support for the protection of civilians, personnel of UNISFA, and humanitarian relief and development actors, allowing UNIFSA and its partners to rapidly deploy and enabling internally displaced persons to safely return to their homes. Additionally, it surveys, verifies and clears UNISFA and Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism border access and patrol routes and clears priority areas and explosive threats in the Mission area. UNMAS patrol support teams remain in a state of readiness to deploy in support of the Mechanism's ground patrols at both sector headquarters in Kadugli, Sudan, and in Gok Machar, South Sudan. Since its deployment, UNMAS has cleared some 957 km of roads and 2 million m^2 of land within the Abyei Area from explosive hazards, enabling the safe delivery of humanitarian aid.

Facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid

28. UNISFA supports the work of agencies, funds and programmes, as well as a number of national and international humanitarian organizations currently operating in Abyei, including through mine clearance, as described above. Nevertheless, restrictions imposed by the Government of the Sudan on NGOs limit the implementation capacity of humanitarian and development actors, especially in northern parts of Abyei. Additional challenges include lack of adequate funds, high implementation costs owing to security and logistical constraints, delays in the issuance of travel permits and delays in the movement of personnel and supplies by the Government of the Sudan. Poor road conditions impede the delivery of aid and the movement of personnel. Efforts to bring in badly needed education and health staff are impeded by high costs and political sensitivities. The conflict in South Sudan has had an impact on humanitarian operations in Abyei, as illustrated by the temporary relocation of international staff, the looting of and the charging of high prices for supplies procured in South Sudan and delays in the activities of NGOs supported by South Sudan offices, particularly those based in Agok.

Supporting the capacity of the Abyei Police Service, the policing function and intercommunal engagement

29. The 20 June 2011 Agreement and relevant Security Council resolutions define the policing functions of UNISFA in terms of support, capacity-building and training for the Abyei Police Service. To engage with these tasks, Security Council resolution 1990 (2011) provides for a ceiling of 50 police personnel for the police contingent of UNISFA, of which only 20 are currently deployed owing to the failure by the Government of the Sudan to issue visas for police personnel. As the Abyei Police Service has not been established, there is currently no opportunity for UNISFA police to perform their support and capacity-building role as originally envisaged.

30. The lack of criminal justice and rule of law institutions makes it impossible to effectively prosecute intercommunal crimes and to protect and promote the rights of individuals, and has contributed to a culture of impunity, with victims and witnesses

reluctant to report violations and abuses. This notwithstanding, UNISFA police have found innovative ways to play a critical role in partially filling the law and order vacuum. The strategic review observed that UNISFA police had made a positive difference through their direct engagement in promoting peaceful coexistence between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. That work had contributed to ensuring the safety of Abyei residents by mitigating the risks associated with the seasonal migration of the Misseriya towards the southern part of Abyei, and to the fact that a number of Misseriya were settling in Abyei on a permanent basis.

31. In the absence of the Abyei Police Service, UNISFA has worked to strengthen the capacities of community protection committees to assist with the management of law and order processes. UNISFA restricts its support to facilitating community protection committees as unarmed neighbourhood watch mechanisms. Despite the objection of the Sudan to the establishment of community protection committees in northern Abyei, UNISFA continues to engage with the Sudan in an attempt to persuade it to permit a similar mechanism in the Misseriya community. While challenges remain in expanding the concept to the northern parts of Abyei, the community protection committees in the Ngok Dinka areas have become an effective, albeit informal, community-based policing mechanism, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2205 (2015).

32. UNISFA has worked to promote confidence-building measures between the communities through facilitating reconciliation processes at the grass-roots level. It has also encouraged the parties to promote community dialogue by convening a peace conference between the traditional chiefs of the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya, which served as a catalyst to renew dialogue between the two communities. A common market now flourishing in Amiet is a visible symbol of improved intercommunity relations, although a simmering dispute about the future location of the market could potentially spark violence.

33. In the absence of formal detention facilities, individuals suspected of committing major crimes have been transferred outside of Abyei and handed over to the relevant Government. Minor crimes are adjudicated by traditional courts in the Abyei Area. Community protection committees oversee informal detention facilities in Abyei town, Agok and the Amiet market for the short-term detention of suspects. UNISFA has deployed two police officers with correctional backgrounds to advise and assist the committees in providing detention facilities that are safe and humane, and to focus on mediation, reconciliation and other alternatives to the use of detention, where appropriate. These officers are instrumental in increasing the awareness and skills of the committees and in contributing to the strengthening of existing informal law and order mechanisms. The Mission's corrections capacity is, however, unable to effectively cover all relevant detention facilities (in Abyei Town, Agok and the Amiet market).

34. Other actions taken to address policing functions include the co-location of United Nations Police (UNPOL) with the Agok community protection committee, which is supported by approximately 21 unarmed South Sudan National Police Service personnel to address issues relating to law and order. The police component provides support and advice to the UNISFA Force Commander and the military component on public order management and community security issues within the Abyei Area. UNPOL also conducts joint police and military community-based interactive patrols to monitor issues related to public order, participates in meetings of the joint security committee with members of both communities regarding peace and stability, and advises young people, elders and traditional leaders on law and order through community policing outreach programs.

Security-related tasks

35. Thanks to the robust deployment of UNISFA, day and night patrolling and timely response to incidents, many armed incidents have either been prevented or had their impact minimized. The military deployment to cope with the security consequences of political deadlock has been influenced by climatic conditions, migration patterns, areas of settlement and infrastructure and logistical constraints.

36. During the rainy season, UNISFA troops are deployed along the main supply road with two other company operating bases in Tajale and Marial Achak, which were developed as permanent camps to effectively protect communities and returnees in those areas. As a temporary risk-mitigation measure, three corridors on the north-south axis were designated for seasonal migration of the three major Misseriya subclans: the Awlad Kamil and Fayyarin, the Mazaghna (Muzama), and the Omran and Fadliya. The objective of the corridors is to prevent conflict among the Misseriya clans, and also between Dinka and Misseriya populations, without imposing physical separation of these communities.

Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and responsibilities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

37. The mandate of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to assist the parties in ensuring the observance of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone has made progress only relatively recently. During a 14 October 2015 meeting, the parties verbally agreed on a centre line for the Zone, following which a meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism was held on 5 June 2016. Operational activities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, such as ground monitoring or the establishment of team sites, have been affected by delays in obtaining approvals for ground movement, although on 21 January 2017 the Sudan granted approval for a joint reconnaissance mission to Buram. On 23 January, South Sudan approved a reconnaissance mission to Malakal, including ground patrols. The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism continues to facilitate liaison between the parties and builds mutual trust. Nevertheless, the parties have yet to invite the Mechanism to participate in developing effective bilateral management mechanisms along the border or to provide support to ad hoc committees outside the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone.

38. The 5 June 2016 meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism led to some positive developments for the mandate of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The Sudan authorized its senior national monitor to approve the scheduled aerial monitoring patrols, and also granted approval for the ground monitoring missions. Aerial monitoring missions from Gok Machar were recently approved by South Sudan. Reconnaissance missions to the proposed sector headquarters in Buram have recently been conducted with consent from both parties. In November 2016, both the Sudan and South Sudan announced their withdrawal from the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. The Sudan has formally requested the African Union and UNISFA to verify its claim. These activities and developments are welcome; however, they fall short of the Security Council benchmarks for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to reach full operating capability. Given the political paralysis regarding the future of Abyei, it is unlikely that the benchmarks will be met in the medium term. Accordingly, for the coming period, it is recommended that the Mechanism be authorized and resourced to function at its present interim operating capacity.

39. The effectiveness of aerial patrols is severely hampered by the lack of air assets with the necessary capabilities of range and adequate air-to-ground visibility. Helicopters are particularly poorly suited to air-to-ground surveillance. Furthermore, during the wet season, ground patrols are heavily constrained by a lack of mobility, and the demining of key ground routes is suspended throughout the area of operations in the light of UNMAS standing down during this period. The review team discussed with both parties the need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of aerial patrols by deploying, within existing budget ceilings, a fixed-wing aircraft fitted with imaging technology to increase the situational awareness and visibility of the area of operations. Both the Sudan and South Sudan welcomed the suggestion and agreed to commence formal discussions on the proposal.

Force configuration, equipment and staffing

40. The 2015 military capability study found that the authorized military strength of UNISFA of 5,326 was appropriate to implement its mandate in Abyei and with respect to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, and stressed that any reduction in troop numbers would seriously hamper the Mission's ability to continue to secure the situation and prevent conflict between the two communities or a wider escalation that could involve the two countries. Reference was made to the size of the Abyei Area, the lack of infrastructure, the challenging terrain and the additional requirement to execute policing tasks. The strategic review reaffirmed those findings in the light of the current situation as grounds for maintaining UNISFA strength at current levels to enable it to protect civilians, humanitarian personnel and operations, to continue implementing its multifaceted conflict mitigation strategy and to ensure the safety and security of the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, including during the migration season, as well as work with the parties and maintain the dialogue on the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone through the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

41. In the light of the vulnerabilities of the Misseriya in the north-western migration corridor, operational adjustments are required to enhance the protection role of UNISFA, including through the establishment of additional bases in the north-western migration corridor, all of which will be undertaken with the authorized ceiling.

42. When considering all options for enhanced efficiency, mention must be made of the recommendation of the military capability study to repatriate tank and artillery units in order to generate two additional force reserve companies. That recommendation was explored as a cost-saving measure but was not pursued further, as the net savings were minimal. Furthermore, and as stressed by Ethiopia, the strategic and deterrent value of the tank and artillery units in Abyei should be borne in mind. That value outweighs any cost considerations.

43. The scope for Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism activity is significantly limited by the paralysis in the political process. As already mentioned, the Mechanism should be supported at its present interim operating capacity for the coming period. Currently, 557 troops are deployed for force protection in Kadugli and Gok Machar. It is recommended to continue the suspension of the deployment of the remaining two companies that are foreseen to bring the Mechanism to full operational capacity. To enable the currently deployed force to capitalize on further progress between the parties, the aerial surveillance capacity of the Mechanism should be enhanced within existing resources, by deploying fixed-wing aircraft with advanced imaging and visibility capabilities.

44. Recruitment to UNISFA has been severely hampered by delays in the issuance, and by the non-issuance, of visas. Steps will be taken by UNISFA to fill all existing vacancies in its staffing table, including for positions such as principal officer, community liaison officers and human rights officers. This will enhance its capacity to fulfil vital political, coordination, protection and community-relations functions. Efforts to fill these positions will require the Sudan to grant visa approvals, including to community liaison officers.

45. Considerable progress has been made in improving the living and working conditions of UNISFA staff, in refurbishing and upgrading the accommodations, with special attention paid to the needs of female staff, as well as to improving the staff welfare and recreation facilities. Drainage systems have been improved to avoid the flooding of airfields, roads and vulnerable parts of the accommodation areas. With the acquisition of the land adjacent to the existing Mission headquarters site, the current helicopter parking and landing sites will be relocated farther away from the residential areas, thus making the camp safer. The ongoing construction of the perimeter fence, additional guard towers and the installation of closed-circuit television systems will greatly enhance the safety and security of the premises. The living and working conditions in Kadugli and other team sites visited have been upgraded and are in good condition. Nevertheless, there is a general need to develop more all-weather roads in the Abyei Area and to expedite the installation of wastewater treatment plants throughout the Mission area that fully comply with United Nations environmental standards.

V. Observations

46. It is regrettable that the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have made no further progress in the implementation of the 20 June 2011 Agreement, including the establishment of the joint interim institutions: the Abyei Area Administration, the Abyei Area Council and the Abyei Police Service. There has also been no significant progress on the border monitoring mechanism. The relative calm achieved by UNISFA should ideally have served as a foundation on which meaningful political processes would be based, joint arrangements and public services would function, and humanitarian, recovery and development initiatives would take root to benefit all of the people and residents of Abyei. The reality, however, is that the Sudan and South Sudan have thus far failed to grasp the political and development opportunities afforded by the effectiveness of UNISFA in Abyei.

47. All interlocutors unanimously commended UNISFA for successfully maintaining security in Abyei, and reaffirmed its value in creating stability in the Area, calling for further extensions of the mandate of UNISFA. There was also consensus that the 20 June 2011 Agreement was moribund. Without a breakthrough, the political processes that should drive its implementation were in a state of atrophy, the joint administrative arrangements foreseen in the Agreement were not likely to be established in the medium term and, in the current regional context, the Sudan and South Sudan had little inclination to engage constructively on resolving the question of the future of Abyei. Against that backdrop, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, which should be the primary mechanism through which the parties amicably resolved joint issues, had itself become a forum for confrontation.

48. In the face of intractable paralysis in implementing the 20 June 2011 Agreement, the people of Abyei are left with a variety of unfulfilled needs. These include formal administrative, policing and rule of law institutions, as well as the provision of education, health care, sanitation and clean water, and other public and human development services and humanitarian assistance. In the resulting

governance void, the expectations placed on the Mission are high, and UNISFA has been compelled to respond by improvising to partially compensate for the absence of joint institutions. In so doing, the Mission has utilized its capabilities in pragmatic, constructive ways to serve the needs of the people of Abyei and advance security conditions, including through activities that fall outside the literal provisions of the original mandate of UNISFA. This practical approach is exemplified by the work of UNISFA civilian staff; UNISFA military staff, through liaison officers and meetings of the joint security committee; and UNPOL, in supporting initiatives that promote intercommunal dialogue and harmony and in developing and supporting the practice of community policing through the community protection committees.

The imperative of reviving political efforts

49. The inflexible political positions of the Sudan and South Sudan, which are often mirrored in the stances taken by the high-level Misseriya and Ngok Dinka community leaders, remain the principal impediment to progress on the Abyei issue. Both Governments must demonstrate a new spirit of compromise and mutual accommodation to break the deadlock. They must be requested to enhance their facilitation of UNISFA operations, and to ensure that all operational obstacles faced by UNISFA are removed, including issues related to the Athony airport. The influence of the Government of the Sudan on the Misseriya and the Government of South Sudan on the Ngok Dinka must be exercised in constructive ways that advance intercommunal harmony and peaceful coexistence, and ensure the participation of both communities in UNISFA community policing efforts.

50. In this regard, the conflict over Abyei is fundamentally a political problem that requires a political solution. Growing instability in South Sudan and the remaining challenges posed by unresolved issues relating to the Darfur region, and South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, in the Sudan, have served to distract international attention from Abyei, leaving it with an uncertain future. The revival of meaningful political efforts is essential and, in this regard, the role of the African Union in resuscitating the dialogue between the Sudan and South Sudan over Abyei is paramount. UNISFA will continue to lend the support necessary to the effort of the African Union, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, to actively engage at the highest levels with the Governments of both countries, with a view to restarting political dialogue on Abyei and to creating conditions conducive to resuming the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. This should be the basis for further joint meetings that address outstanding issues of mutual interest to the Sudan and South Sudan.

51. Alongside renewing political engagement with the parties, the United Nations will continue to work with the Facilitator of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee in his liaison and coordination role by addressing to the responsible Government the operational challenges faced by the Mission.

The need for development and humanitarian assistance

52. Interlocutors conveyed the strongly held view that humanitarian and development assistance was urgently required to build the resilience of local communities, to promote self-reliance, to lessen dependence on international support and to contribute to stability and calm in Abyei. Ensuring access to health care, providing primary and vocational education, establishing livelihood programmes and continuing the provision of support to the local security committees will help

maintain peace, minimize recourse to crime and strengthen community cohesion. The investment and support provided to local community security arrangements are bearing fruit and serve as a good example of how relatively low-cost development initiatives can make a difference. To sustain current achievements, coordinated engagement is required from the United Nations country teams and NGOs in both the Sudan and South Sudan, with each agency contributing according to its comparative advantage. Also required is enhanced coordination between UNISFA and humanitarian and development actors to maximize the impact of projects and programmes.

53. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and NGOs should also redouble their efforts to mobilize funding and resources for programmes in the Abyei Area and give particular attention to the need for recovery and development projects and public services, as they are required to consolidate stability and calm.

54. Additionally, enhanced coordination with regard to monitoring and reporting on human rights violations and potential threats to the civilian population; strengthened efforts to ensure the protection of children, including through the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism; and the formulation of a structured, inter-agency approach to tackling sexual and gender-based violence, must be priorities. Closer coordination is also required between UNISFA and humanitarian and recovery actors, both at the field level and in the Juba and Khartoum United Nations country teams.

Policing functions

55. It is clear that the formation of the Abyei Police Service is not likely in the short or medium term, and that suspending all current policing work pending the establishment of a joint police service will effectively defer such work indefinitely. It is equally clear that the community protection committees, despite their highly commendable achievements, cannot, as informal organizations of unpaid volunteers, be relied upon to bear full or long-term responsibility for policing functions in Abyei. The Government of the Sudan must be urged to routinely approve visas in order to maintain the authorized ceiling of 50 police officers. While the recent granting of visas for 10 UNPOL officers is welcome, the Sudan must ensure that visa approvals for all staff members of UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism are regularly and rapidly granted.

Opportunities to promote intercommunal harmony

56. In contrast to the political deadlock at the Juba and Khartoum level, and in the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and other joint institutions, community-level relationships between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya communities demonstrate great potential for deepening mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence at the local level. There is an urgent need, therefore, to strengthen the community liaison function, particularly considering the fact that the promotion of intercommunal harmony contributes to reducing crime and to enhancing the protective environment. In this regard, there is a need to prevail upon the Government of the Sudan to routinely approve visas and related permits for community liaison officers.

VI. General recommendations

57. Senior officials in the Sudan and South Sudan and other interlocutors of the review team underlined that, in the current regional context, the continued presence

of UNISFA remains critical. Any weakening of its strength would be ill advised, as this could trigger severe consequences for the security and stability of the Abyei Area, with regional repercussions.

58. Accordingly, I recommend the extension of the mandate of UNISFA for a further period of six months, along with the implementation of the proposals contained in paragraphs 38, 39, 43 and 56 of the present report. The Mission as it currently stands is optimally suited to successfully discharge the security and other aspects of its mandate. While the accomplishments of UNISFA must be acknowledged, the Sudan and South Sudan must also recognize that an open-ended mandate is indefensible.

59. In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude and appreciation to Major-General Hassen Ebrahim Mussa, the former Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNISFA, and to Brigadier General Zewdu Kiros Gebrekidan, Officer-in-Charge of UNISFA during the period of the review, for their efforts to enhance peace and stability in the Abyei Area, often under very difficult conditions. I also commend the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom; the Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Haile Menkerios; the African Union, including the African Union High-level Implementation Panel; and the Government of Ethiopia, for their active engagement in support of the stabilization of the Abyei Area.